

THREE RIVERS, April, 1870.

SIR,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of Mr. Under Secretary of State, dated 24th ultimo, accompanied by a petition of the Rev. J. Bonenfant and other priests and inhabitants of the District of Montmagny, praying for the commutation of the sentence of death pronounced against Elzéar Guillemette at the last Criminal Assizes of the District of Arthabaska, and requesting me, by direction of the Governor General, to furnish such observations as I should consider useful for the information of His Excellency.

In order to enable His Excellency to judge on the merits of the case, I transmit copies of the indictment, of all the evidence given during the trial, as well as of the Coroner's inquest, of a deposition taken by him as such, of depositions also taken by him as a Justice of the Peace, and of a letter read to the Juries, and referred to in the evidence, as well as of the sentence pronounced against Guillemette.

The principal depositions, in the absence of which there would have been no proof in support of the indictment, are those of Onésime Richard, of Marie Le Blanc, wife of Prosper Beauchêne, and of Philippe Blais. On reading those depositions, I admit that enough is shewn therein to justify the verdict of guilty; but after having seen and heard the depositions of those witnesses, as I have had the opportunity of so doing, I must declare that they have not inspired me with any confidence in their veracity.

Onésime Richard had all the appearance of a person bordering on idiocy; his gestures, his looks, his manner of expressing himself, his hesitations, indicated in him a mind, if not somewhat diseased, at least nearly so. There were with him pauses frequent enough and pretty long, which appeared to me as betokening a want of memory and a mind very little sure of what he was to say. I have several times tried to make him shorten them, but without always succeeding.

Marie Le Blanc, wife of Prosper Beauchêne, has, on the contrary, shewn much intelligence. There were also with her, however, pauses and stops frequent and very long, without being able to prevail upon her to make them shorter, in spite of my attempts to that effect. Timidity did not appear to me to be the cause of those frequent and very long pauses and stops: she had already given a deposition before a Justice of the Peace, and had even been heard as a witness before the Court of Queen's Bench at the Assizes of February, 1869; her voice was firm, her look bold, expressing herself very fluently when she wanted to speak, and the solemnities of justice did not appear to cause her any trouble. Was she so little sure of what she had to say that she was afraid to forget, to contradict herself, or to be contradicted? Had she told before the Justice of the Peace a story, which she was afraid not to be able to repeat correctly? Finally, why those pauses and stops which she could not be prevailed upon to shorten? Here, again, I must declare that this young woman has not inspired me with any confidence in her veracity.

Philippe Blais was nine years of age when the facts, which he pretends to relate,